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The Sandman

The Wake

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AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT A MESSENGER WAS SENT OUT TO EACH MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.

AND THE MESSENGER FOUND THEM, ONE BY ONE, AND GAVE THEM ITS MESSAGE, EACH TO EACH.

THE FAMILY DID NOT SEND TO ASK FROM WHOM THE MESSENGER HAD COME; IT WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT MESSENGERS HAD VISITED THEM, AFTER ALL.

AND THERE ARE SOME POWERS THAT NO ONE, NOT EVEN THE ENDLESS, SEEKS TO INQUIRE INTO TOO DEEPLY.

ONE FOR SORROW, TWO FOR SORROW, THREE FOR SORROW, FOUR FOR FOR FOR I DON'T KNOW BUT I'M ALL BORED OF SORROW, FIVE FOR THREE TWO ONE, SIX FOR GOLD, SEVEN FOR A MAGPIE WHO TELLS ME WHERE TO GO!!!

HELLO EVERYBODY. IT'S ME. NOT ANYONE ELSE. JUST ME.

HI!!.

SO THEY LEFT THEIR REALMS, AND THEY GATHERED TOGETHER, AT A STONY CROSSROADS IN THE SHADOW OF THE QUINSY MOUNTAINS.

Chapter One: Which occurs in the wake of what has gone before

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IT WAS THERE THEY MET. AND THE YOUNGEST OF THEM SAID:

I THOUGHT DESTRUCTION WOULD BE HERE. I THOUGHT HE'D COME.

IT WOULD APPEAR NOT.

WE ARE ALL HERE, THEN, WHO WILL COME HERE.

YOU KNOW SOMETHING? WE CAME HERE FOR YOU, A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN YOU DIED. WELL, IT WASN'T HERE. AND THAT WASN'T YOU.

BUT WE DID ANYWAY.

OUR BROTHER IS DEAD.

I... I AM THE SITHCUNDMAN OF THE NECROPOLIS LITHARGE. I WELCOME YOU TO OUR CITY, GENTLE-FOLK.

HELLO, MOULDER. DO YOU KNOW WHO WE ARE?

I BELIEVE I DO, LADY...

THERE ARE *TALES*... IN THE LIBRARY OF LITHARGE. SCRAPS AND FRAGMENTS...

OUR BROTHER IS DEAD. WE HAVE COME FOR THE CEREMENTS, AND FOR THE BOOKS OF RITUAL, WHICH ARE IN YOUR KEEPING.

YES. *YES*. OF COURSE YOU HAVE.

AND HE ORDERED THE DOOR OPENED FOR THEM, THE GREAT GATE TO THE CATACOMBS BENEATH THE CITY.

HONORED GUESTS... I MUST *WARN* YOU...

THE CATACOMBS ARE DEEP AND DARK: THEY RUN FOR MANY LEAGUES BENEATH THE CITY... THERE *ARE* MAPS... BUT THE CATACOMBS *CHANGE*, LIKE A THING *ALIVE*, AND CANNOT BE MAPPED...

WE APPRECIATE THE ADVICE; BUT IT IS NOT NEEDED, MOULDER.

WHICH OF US MUST GO TO THE ROOM?

NONE OF US CAN GO INSIDE, NOT EVEN OUR SISTER. WE NEED AN *ENVOY.*

AND *WHERE* DO WE FIND AN ENVOY?

WE DON'T *FIND* ONE, SILLY-OLD-LADY-SISTER!!!

WE *MAKE* ONE.

OUT! OF! MUD!

HE IS YOURS, NOW, MY SISTER.

I HAVEN'T DONE THIS IN AGES.

HELLO. WELCOME TO THE WORLD.

I WANT TO NAME HIM.

PLIPPY PLOPPY CHEESE NOSE?

A GOOD NAME, THOUGH, SISTER. IT MUST BE A **REAL** NAME THAT PEOPLE CAN SAY.

MM. NO. TRY AGAIN.

EBLIS O'SHAUGHNESSY?

OKAY.

EBLIS O'SHAUGHNESSY: YOU WERE CREATED AND GIFTED BY FIVE OF THE ENDLESS, BUT YOU CAN NEITHER DREAM NOR, ULTIMATELY, DESTROY, AND THAT SHALL BE YOUR TRIUMPH AND THAT SHALL BE YOUR TRAGEDY.

YOU'LL NEED A LIGHT, TO SEE WITH, DOWN THERE. DELIRIUM, GIVE THE MAN SOMETHING TO LIGHT HIS WAY.

EBLIS O'SHAUGHNESSY. HAVE A JELLYFISHY, EBLIS O'SHAUGHNESSY.

AND THE CREATURE MADE BY THE FIVE WENT DOWN INTO THE CATACOMBS BENEATH THE NECROPOLIS LITHARGE; AND IT FOUND, WITH NO DIFFICULTY, A ROOM THAT MANY COULD SPEND THEIR WHOLE LIVES HUNTING FOR, WITHOUT SUCCESS.

WHICH OF THEM IS DEAD?

DREAM.

YOU HAVE COME FOR THE CERE CLOTH, THEN, AND FOR THE CEREMONY.

YES.

THEY ARE YOURS. TAKE THEM.

NOW GO.

AND, HAVING GAINED WHAT HE HAD COME FOR, THE ENVOY RETURNED TO THE WORLD ABOVE. HE WALKED AWAY FROM THE LOW KEENING, THAT ECHOED THROUGH THE CATACOMBS, LIKE A MOTHER SORROWING FOR HER DEPARTED CHILD.

IS HE IN?

OUR LORD IS INSIDE, CAIN, YES. BUT HE SEEMS NOT TO WISH TO BE DISTURBED.

HAS HE GIVEN EXPLICIT ORDERS TO THAT EFFECT?

WELL... NO...

THEN I AM GOING IN.

MY LORD! I DEMAND AUDIENCE! I AM SORRY, BUT THIS HAS GONE ON QUITE LONG ENOUGH.

You are... Cain...

PRECISELY SO.

I AM CAIN. AND THIS IS MY *CONTRACT* WITH YOUR PREDECESSOR...

With me, Cain.

I am Dream of the Endless. Your contract is with me.

MY LETTER OF COMMISSION -- ORIGINALLY DRAWN UP BEFORE THE DAWN OF TIME, AS REISSUED AND AMENDED IN APRIL OF 1989--STATES *QUITE* EXPLICITLY THAT I AM PART OF A DOUBLE ACT: CAIN AND ABEL, SECRETS AND MYSTERIES. THE THIN ONE AND THE FAT ONE. VICTIM AND VICTOR. IT'S *ALL* HERE.

And...?

AND I DE*MAND*-- I IN*SIST*-- UNDER MY *CON*TRACT--THAT YOU RECREATE MY BROTHER.

OTHERWISE I SHALL BE *FORCED* TO TAKE ACTION OF AN IM*MED*IATE AND *SUMM*ARY NATURE.

Cain. Do not presume.

I do not believe... that I take well to threats, inferred or otherwise...

...Nor to an excess of unwarranted familiarity...

AH.

I am not impressed by your behavior.

I AM... I AM SORRY.

BUT, MY LORD, MY *BROTHER*... PLEASE?

There are... others... hurt, Cain.

YES, YES, *MANY* OF THEM. BUT MY BROTHER...

Abel.

THAT'S EXACTLY IT. *ABEL*.

Describe him for me.

HE'S NOT AS ATTRACTIVE AS I; HE IS--AND I AM BEING CHARITABLE HERE, MARK YOU--A GAP-TOOTHED, BLUBBERY, STUTTERING HALF-WIT. NO DRESS-SENSE, AND A VERY, VERY VAGUE (BUT CONTINUAL) SMELL OF CABBAGE-WATER ABOUT HIS PERSON.

CHEWS WITH HIS MOUTH OPEN.

AND THE STATE OF HIS BATHROOM -- I'M NOT ONE TO GOSSIP, BUT THERE ARE THINGS CRUSTED ON HIS SINK THAT HAVE NOT SIMPLY DEVELOPED INTELLIGENT LIFE BUT HAVE IN ALL PROBABILITY BY NOW EVOLVED THEIR OWN POLITICAL SYSTEMS.

Hush, Cain...

Enough...

I-uh-I-uh-I-I-I-uh- I THOUGHT I WAS-hmm-- OVER AND, mm, DUH DONE WITH.

NONSENSE. LORD MORPHEUS BROUGHT YOU BACK, RIGHT AS RAIN...

Not Morpheus. I have no right to that name. I am Dream of the Endless: it is enough.

IN AETERNUM

MATTHEW?

YOU CAN'T STAY HERE IN THE DARKNESS FOREVER.

MATTHEW? WON'T YOU TALK TO ME? PLEASE?

DARLING?

DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?

GO AWAY.

WELL, THAT'S A START.

JUST LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE.

I CAN LEAVE YOU ALONE, IF THAT IS WHAT YOU WISH. BUT FOR HOW LONG? A DAY? A WEEK? A HUNDRED YEARS?

I SHOULD HAVE STAYED WITH HIM. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE LEFT HIM THERE.

HE WAS MY FRIEND AND I LEFT HIM TO DIE.

MATTHEW. THERE WAS NOTHING YOU COULD HAVE DONE.

I COULD HAVE DIED. I COULD HAVE DIED WHEN THE OTHERS DIED. I COULD HAVE DIED BY HIS SIDE.

AND WHAT GOOD WOULD THAT HAVE DONE?

IF I'D DIED THEN I WOULDN'T BE HERE BEING MISERABLE NOW.

MATTHEW? ISN'T THAT A RATHER SELF-CENTERED POINT OF VIEW?

GO AWAY.

LORD DREAM OF THE ENDLESS SENT A MESSAGE TO ME FOR YOU.

HIM? I'M NOT HIS RAVEN. HE ISN'T THE BOSS. HE CAN'T GIVE ME ORDERS.

MATTHEW... POOR MATTHEW...

AND DON'T PITY ME.

HE DIDN'T SEND YOU AN ORDER. HE SENT YOU A MESSAGE.

WHAT MESSAGE?

HE SAYS TO TELL YOU THAT THE FUNERAL IS TOMORROW, AND THAT THE WAKE IS TONIGHT.

MATTHEW? HE SAID--

I HEARD YOU.

GO AWAY.

DESTINY LED HIS SIBLINGS AND THEIR NEW-MADE ATTENDANT AWAY FROM THE NECROPOLIS.

THE INFLUENCE OF DESTINY WAS ALSO FELT IN OTHER PLACES:

THE ELF-WOMAN SITS AT THE ROUGH WOODEN TABLE AT THE TOAD-STONE, ONE OF THE FREE HOUSES THAT OWE NO ALLEGIANCE TO ANY ONE TIME OR DOMINION. SHE HAS RIDDEN HARD AND LONG, FROM REALM TO REALM, AND SHE IS TIRED, AND HUNGRY, AND THIRSTY.

SHE BLINKS, WITH HEAVY EYES, THEN SETTLES INTO WARM DARKNESS; HEAD ON HER ARMS ON THE WOODEN TRESTLE-TABLE.

NUALA DREAMS.

AND IN HER MOTHER'S HOUSE IN SEATTLE, ROSE WALKER, WHO HAS NOT NEARLY FINISHED UNPACKING, SITS BY THE OLD DOLL'S HOUSE, AND LOOKS AT THE PHOTOGRAPHS, AND THE GLASS-BOXED SPIDERS, AND THE BOOKS THAT THE HOSPICE LIBRARY HAD DECLINED TO ACCEPT--

--(INCLUDING TWO JOEL PETER WITKIN COLLECTIONS, AN EXTENSIVELY ILLUSTRATED VICTORIAN MEDICAL WORK ON THE PROGRESS OF VENEREAL DISEASES AND A WELL-THUMBED COPY OF LESY'S WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP)--

--AND FINDS HERSELF NODDING OFF. ON THE FLOOR OF HER ROOM...

ROSE DREAMS.

AND, IN THE NURSING HOME GARDEN, RICHARD MADOC RESTS HIS FACE IN HIS GLOVED HANDS AND SHIVERS, NOT FROM THE GRAY MORNING CHILL, BUT FROM THE REALIZATION THAT YESTERDAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HALF A DECADE, HE HAD PUT TOGETHER A HANDFUL OF WORDS IN HIS HEAD IN AN ORDER THAT NO ONE HAD EVER PUT THEM BEFORE...

THE FEAR OF IDEAS IS REPLACED BY A SENSATION OF UTTER COMFORT.

RICHARD DREAMS.

SO WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK *YOU'RE* LOOKIN' AT?

LYTA HALL SUSPECTS THAT WHATEVER HAS HAPPENED TO HER IS MORE THAN WHAT HER FOSTER MOTHER MIGHT HAVE CALLED A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN, OR WHAT LYTA'S BEST FRIEND CARLA (WHOM SHE HAS SO FAR BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE, ALTHOUGH SHE HAS A BAD FEELING ABOUT CARLA) WOULD HAVE CALLED GOING UTTERLY BUGFUCK.

SHE HAS MOST OF HER MIND BACK. SHE RETURNED FROM HER MADNESS WITHOUT HER SON.

SHE'S CLEANED OUT HER BANK ACCOUNT. SHE'S RUNNING. TO WHERE, FROM WHAT, SHE DOESN'T KNOW.

IN A CHEAP MOTEL, UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME, LYTA DREAMS.

ALEXANDER BURGESS HAS BEEN, AT HIS QUERULOUS INSISTENCE, BROUGHT TO THE OLD MANOR HOUSE, WHERE HE SITS IN HIS STUDY, STARING OUT OF THE WINDOW AT THE EMPTY LANDSCAPE.

HE CLUTCHES A TINY FINGER-RING IN ONE ARTHRITIC HAND.

HE HAS COME BACK FROM A THOUSAND LIFETIMES OF MADNESS AND FEAR; ALL OF THEM HAVE GONE NOW. HE KEPT HIS SANITY; ALTHOUGH HE FEARS TO SLEEP ALONE.

HE HAS SLEPT FOR FIVE YEARS; HE WISHES HE COULD STAY AWAKE FOREVER.

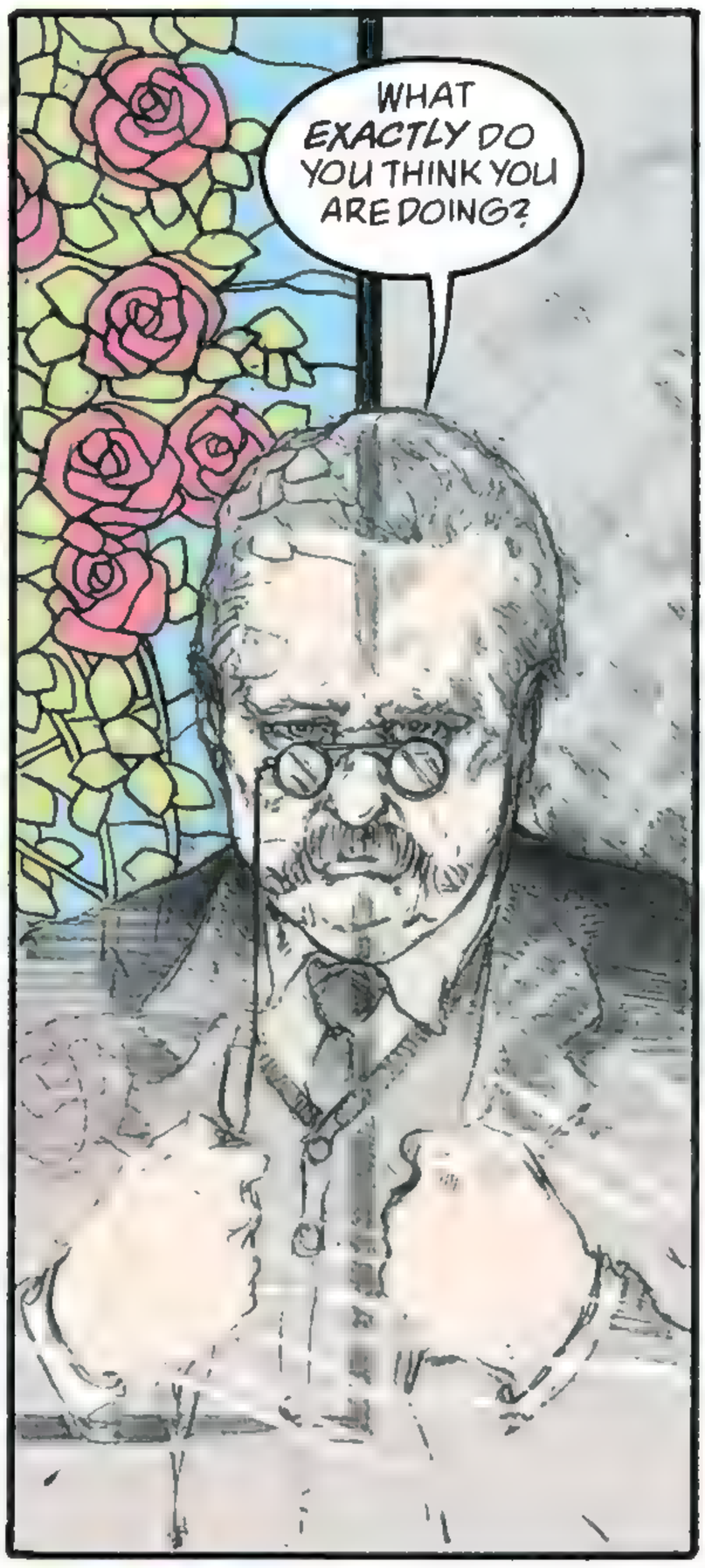
HE CANNOT. IN HIS FATHER'S EMPTY HOUSE, ALEX DREAMS.

AND ROBERT GADLING CONTEMPLATES THE BUILDING OF ANOTHER NEW IDENTITY.

EVER SINCE AUDREY WAS KILLED, HE'S FELT A DEEP WANDERLUST: THE DESIRE TO LEAVE, TO GET AWAY, TO START ANEW.

THE TROUBLE WITH SIX CENTURIES OF TRAVEL, HE PONDERS, IS THAT THERE ARE TOO FEW PLACES HE HASN'T BEEN. HE WANTS TO *GO* SOMEWHERE, NOT TO RETURN SOMEWHERE.

IN THE HOUSE HOB LEFT TO HIMSELF, IN A ROOM FILLED WITH PAPERS AND MAPS, HOB DREAMS.


WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?

I am healing you. Creating you. Giving you life.
I am bringing you back from the dead.

HOOM...
YOUNG MAN, I AM DEAD. I WAS KILLED IN WHAT, FOR ME AT LEAST, WERE FAIRLY UN-PLEASANT CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT HURT. IT WAS DEEPLY UPSETTING, AND PAINFUL.
HOWEVER, IT HAPPENED. I AM DEAD.

IF YOU BRING ME BACK TO LIFE, MY DEATH WILL HAVE NO *MEANING*. I HAD A *FINE* EXISTENCE. I WAS A *GOOD* PLACE. I SPENT A LITTLE TIME WALKING THE WAKING WORLD. I EVEN FELL IN LOVE, ONCE, A LITTLE.

I LIVED A GOOD LIFE AND IT *ENDED*.

WOULD YOU TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME?

But I... would give you back your life, Gilbert.

I UNDERSTAND *PERFECTLY* WHAT YOU ARE OFFERING. I AM, HOWEVER, *DECLINING* IT. WITH THANKS.

I see...

I think I see...

Very well. You may go.

So TITANIA, THE QUEEN OF ALL FAERIE, HAS RAISED HER HORSE AND, DRESSED IN DEEPEST BLACK, SHE RIDES FOR THE NEAREST PORTAL TO THE DREAMING.

AND THE ANGEL DUMA (WHO IS NOT EXACTLY FALLEN, MORE TOPPLED, PERHAPS, OR EVEN TUMBLED), INVOKES A DOOR TO THE DREAMING, AND WALKS THROUGH IT. DUMA'S FEET MAY, OR MAY NOT, QUITE TOUCH THE GROUND.

AND THE LADY BAST, HER FUR THINNING AND HER EYES MILKY AND DIM, SUMMONS ALL THE POWER AT HER DISPOSAL, PULLS TOGETHER TINY STRANDS OF BELIEF, A HANDFUL OF INSTANTS OF HALFHEARTED WORSHIP...

AT A CAT SHOW IN GLASGOW, A TEENAGE BOY STARES AT A ONE-YEAR-OLD ABYSSINIAN AND, FOR A MOMENT, HE SEES A GODDESS...

HEAD HELD HIGH, EYES CLEAR, FUR SLEEK, SHE WALKS TO THE DREAMING.

EXCUSE ME...

YES?

I'M SORRY. I'M NOT SURE WHERE I AM.

HOW ODD.

WHY WOULD THAT BE ODD?

BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM, EITHER.

SOMEBODY'S DIED, HAVEN'T THEY?

I... THINK SO.

THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE, I THINK.

LITTLE BOY, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

ALEX. ALEX BURGESS. SO DID SOMEONE DIE?

YES.

IS IT ME? DID I DIE?

I DON'T THINK SO.

WE ARE HERE FOR THE FUNERAL OF THE KING OF DREAMS.

HERE IS SAID THE KING OF DREAMS.

HANG ON. THE *DREAM-KING*. HE'S DEAD?

HE'S DEAD, YES.

HE *CAN'T* BE DEAD. YOU'RE *LYING!*

NO. HE'S NOT LYING.

CHIRON: PUT HIM DOWN.

IT'S NOT *TRUE.*

I'M AFRAID IT IS.

WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE? AM I DREAMING? THIS ISN'T REAL. IT'S JUST A DREAM...

MRRR. OF COURSE IT'S A DREAM. WHERE ELSE SHOULD THE WAKE FOR THE DREAM LORD BE HELD, BUT IN DREAMS?

AND ALL THESE PEOPLE...?

DREAMERS AND GUESTS. CELEBRANTS AND MOURNERS.

I DON'T... I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* TO THINK... HE *CAN'T* BE DEAD, HE'S MY *FRIEND.*

MOTHER OF *GOD!* WHAT ARE *THEY?*

"THEM?"

"*THEY* ARE THE FAMILY."

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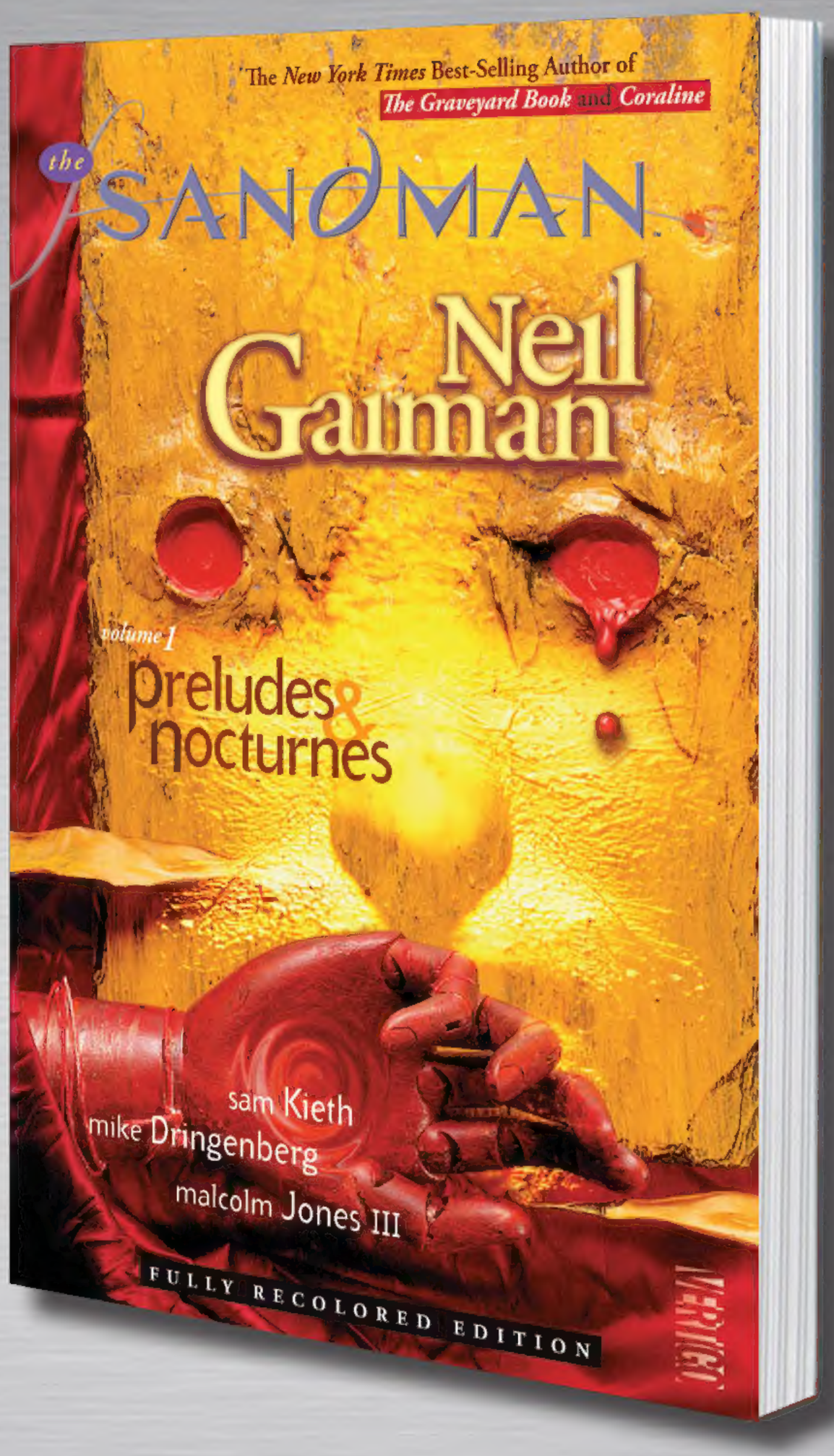

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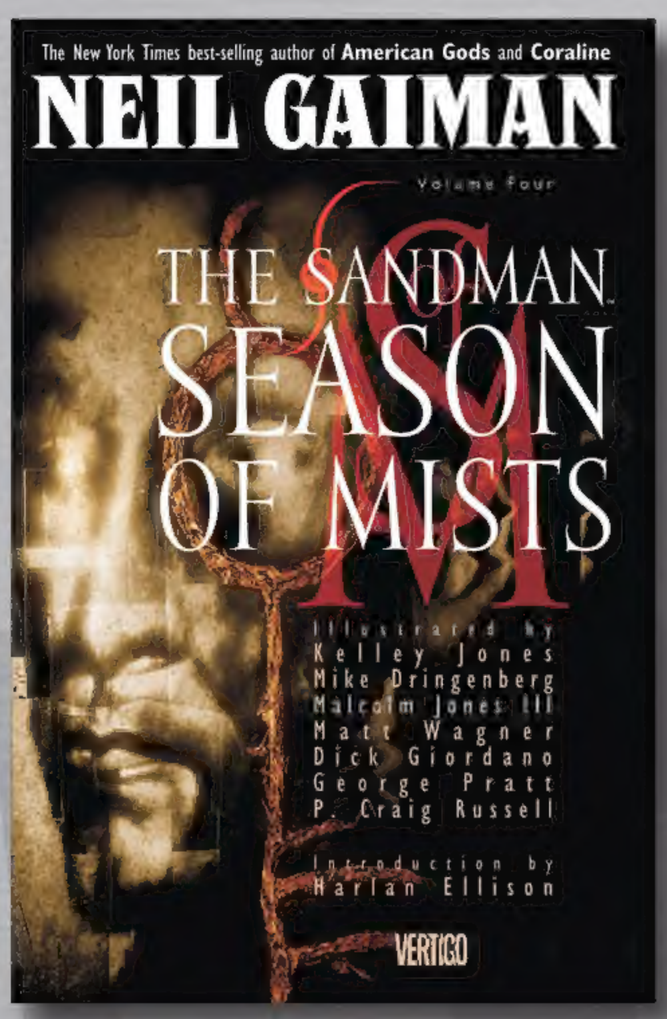

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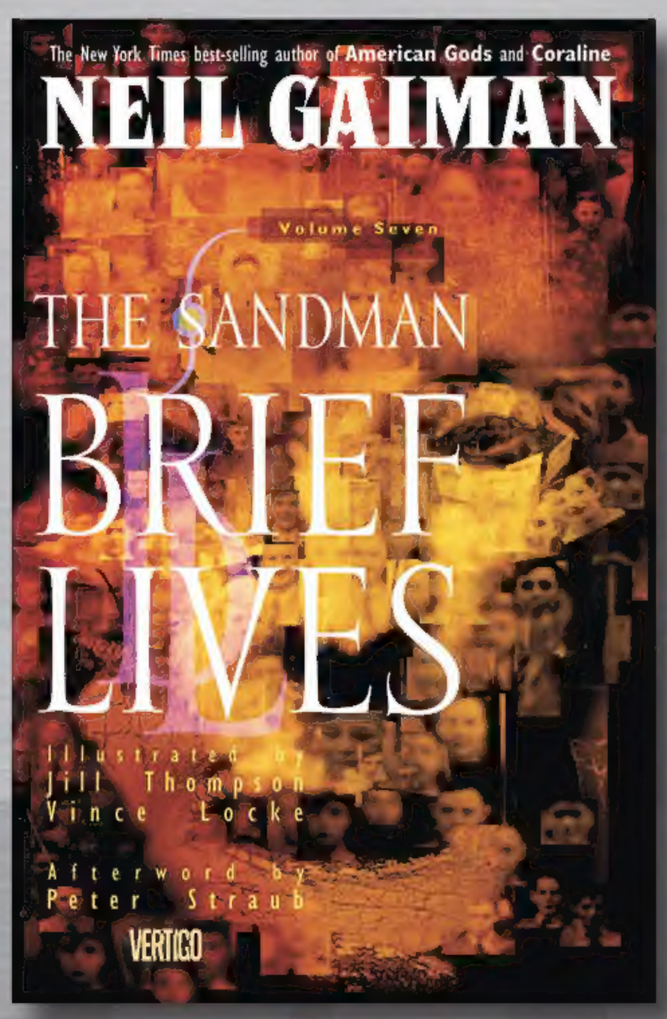

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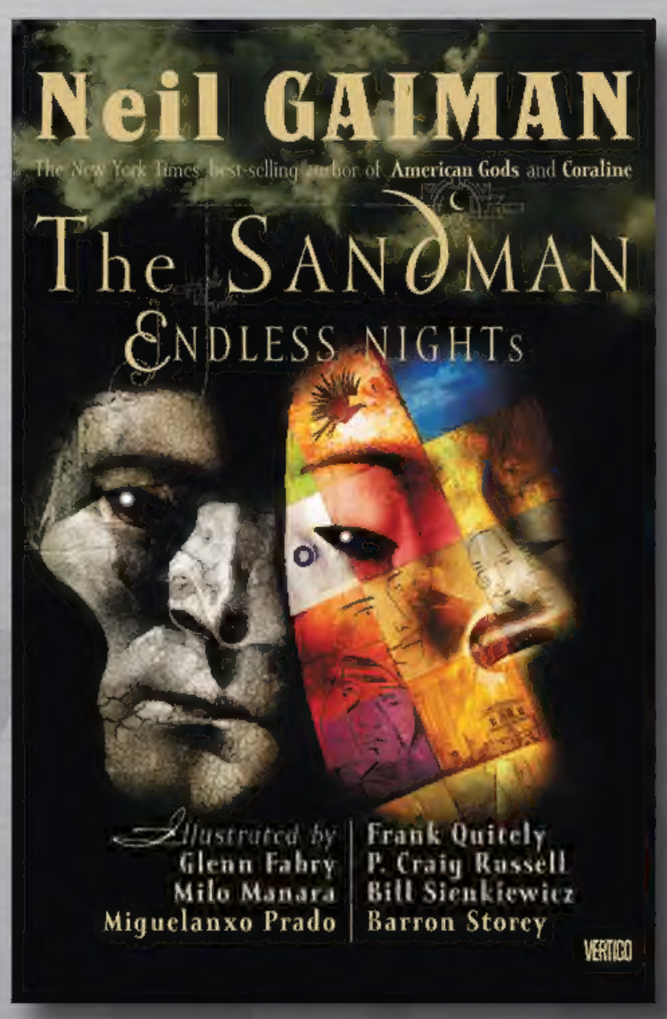

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